

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Special Meeting

Tuesday - July 19, 2019 – 1:00 P.M.

The special meeting of the Knox County Commission was held on Tuesday, July 19, 2019, at 1:00 P.M., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine.

Commission members present were: Dorothy G. Meriwether, Commissioner District #1, and Richard L. Parent, Jr., Commissioner District #2 and Sharyn L. Pohlman, Commissioner District #3.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Wendy Galvin, Chief Deputy Patrick Polky, Register of Deeds Lisa Cottrell,

Others in attendance: Don Jutton, Project Manager-Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI), Greg Hanscom, Municipal Resources, Inc (MRI) (*left at 1:55 P.M.*), Camden Fire Chief Chris Farley, and HR Laurie Bouchard.

Special Meeting – Agenda

Tuesday – July 19th, 2019 – 1:00 P.M.

I. 1:00 Meeting Called To Order

II. 1:01 Action Item

1. Municipal Resources, Inc. Presentation of the Final Report of the Registry of Deeds Organizational Study and the Draft Final Report of the Human Resources Organizational Study and Knox Regional Communications Center Organizational Study for Knox County.
2. Discuss and Vote on Recommendation of 2020 Maine County Commissioners Association (MCCA) Proposed Membership Dues.

III. Adjourn

I. Meeting Called to Order:

Commission Chair Parent called the special meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 1:00 P.M.

II. Action Items:

- Municipal Resources, Inc. Presentation of the Final Report of the Registry of Deeds Organizational Study and the Draft Final Report of the Human Resources Organizational Study and Knox Regional Communications Center Organizational Study for Knox County.

The County will not take action on all three (3) studies today due to each is at a different stage. The Registry of Deeds report is completed. The Commissioners will have final say as to how they want to move along with process.

1) Final Report of the Registry of Deeds Organizational Study:

(A three – four (3-4) page **Final** report completed by Municipal Resources, INC. (MRI) is available upon request).

Items that were discussed were:

- i. Website
- ii. Equipment
- iii. Special Projects
- iv. Original Plans
- v. Technology v. Paper
- vi. Internal Controls
- vii. Job Description
- viii. Verification Process
- ix. Date Backups

2) Recommendations presented by MRI:

- i. Index all documents into the indexing system upon presentation. The State of Maine recording standards conclude Maine is a “race” to record state. As such, all documents presented for recording which meet recording standard must be placed on record by the County Recorder in the order in which presented. No documents whether presented over the counter, through correspondence or via electronic filing presented during official business hours may be held over to the next day. Any alternative could result in liability for the County.
 - ii. Eliminate potential risks for admitting virus’ into the computer systems. In an effort to eliminate the risk of computer virus’ entering into the recording system the department should stop the use of private flash drives connecting to the IQS system for plan copies. A better procedure would be to require individuals to present new unopened flash drives for plan copies.
 - iii. Reduce Staffing by one (1) Part-Time position. In MRI’s opinion, the amount of available staff capacity in this office seems to be a bit higher than the workload reasonably requires. The Registrar is the head of the department and performs a significant amount of functions within the department. Objectively, the size of the office and number of document recordings in the past three (3) years coupled with technological advancements, leads to a conclusion that it is reasonable to provide staffing at just three (3) Full-Time employees. While there was suggestion that office coverage for vacations and sick-time warrants maintaining the current Part-Time position, since the office is only open 1820 hours per year, and three (3) Full-Time staff positions provide 5460 hours of coverage, it is believed that the challenge posed by vacations and sick-time is about better scheduling, not about staff capacity. Consequently, it is recommended that the current Part-Time Deeds Clerk position be abandoned following the planned retirement of the incumbent in the fall of 2019. This will hopefully provide time to hire and train a Full-Time Deeds Clerk to fill the existing vacancy. If the Registrar of Deeds continues to feel that more staffing is needed, seasonally or on a Part-Time, year round basis, then it is believed that she should document the need by carefully tracking time and transactions to clearly demonstrate future staffing needs. If the need for additional clerical/administrative staff capacity is ultimately documented to the Administrator’s satisfaction, it is suggested that a crossed trained floater position be evaluated so that incidental, unanticipated vacancies or absences and one –time special projects (like historic document scanning) might be better accommodated organization wide.
- *A motion was made by Commissioner Pohlman to accept the recommendation from Municipal Resources, Inc (MRI). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Meriwether. A vote was taken with two Commissioners in favor. (Commissioner Parent abstained).*

3) Draft Final Report of the Human Resources Organizational Study:

*(A four (4) page **Draft** report completed by Municipal Resources, INC (MRI)).*

Items that were discussed were:

- i. Procedures, processes, protocols for recruitment, hiring, supervision, evaluation, discipline, compensation, record keeping, and administration of benefits and entitlements need to be organized, structured and administered in compliance with multiple standards, rules, and regulation imposed by Federal and State agencies, insurance providers and, in some instances, collective bargaining agreements.
- ii. Input from the Senior Department Managers regarding the usefulness and viability of the current limited hour contracted HR person.
- iii. Some Department Managers expressed a degree of concern regarding the experience and expertise in the private sector does not always directly translate when dealing with some of the more idiosyncratic aspects of management in the public sector. However, at the same time acknowledging that the structure and consistency of the approach that is advocated is beneficial and helpful.

All in all, the input from all nine (9) Department Managers, in spite of some criticisms, was considered largely supportive of the contracted function and the consultant and when asked “what could be done to improve the situation?” There were several note worthy suggestions and have been considered in the recommendations.

4) Suggestions from the Department Managers:

- i. One manager suggested that the Consultant develop a structured process and standardized procedures that can be administered at the Department level and/or by a lower level Administrative Assistant in the County Administrators Office who could also support other Administrative efforts and projects while performing a majority of the HR duties under the guidance and direction of the Consultant. It was suggested that this would also allow for a better balancing of workload in the Administrators Office and provide capacity for “all those projects that never seems to get done because of other time demands”.
- ii. Another Department Manager suggested that the County consider hiring Ms. Bouchard or a similarly qualified professional on a Full-Time basis and offer a package of HR services to municipalities in the County on a limited fee basis to recapture some of the cost.
- iii. Several Department Managers suggested that Ms. Bouchard could be more helpful and effective if she adjusted her style somewhat. Her approach is reportedly a bit assertive and sometimes seems as too authoritative. It was suggested that her guidance and assistance might be better received if she could soften her approach to be more informative and less dominant and directional.
- iv. It was suggested that access to Ms. Bouchard for advice and support might be better structured to help with limited accessibility by adjusting her schedule in consultation with the management team on a Quarterly basis so that seasonal considerations or unique departmental circumstances can be factored in.

5) Observations and Recommendations from Municipal Resources, INC (MRD):

- i. It is recommended that the Contract between the County and Ms. Bouchard be renegotiated/updated since it has remained unchanged in the past seven (7) years. Some of the initial scope elements were project oriented and should have been largely completed by now. Consequently, it may be possible for more consultant time to be focused on individual department needs, especially in the larger operating units. It would be advantageous to engage the Department Managers in a discussion of their perceived needs for support and assistance from HR (including scheduling considerations) in advance of updating the agreement to be sure that it addresses as many desired support efforts as may be reasonable and affordable.
- ii. It would be positive for Ms. Bouchard to meet with each of the nine (9) Department Managers one-on-one as soon as possible to explain her approach to supporting the HR needs of the organization and discuss how the role of HR best fits with each individual operation and how she might be most responsive in meeting those needs.
- iii. It is not clear if the notion offered by one of the Department Managers that the County consider hiring Ms. Bouchard or a similarly qualified professional on a Full-Time basis, and offer a package of HR services to municipalities might be attractive to the County Leadership or to the municipalities in the County. However, it certainly seems like a potentially viable concept that might warrant exploration. The financial viability of the concept might be enhanced if service was offered to the community based non-profits in the immediate area as well.
- iv. If/when the County Administrator believes that the workload in the County Administrative operations in need of rebalancing, then it would also be good to look at any changes in the context of restructuring the HR Contract. The idea that some HR processes and procedures could be administered by a lower level Administrative Assistant in the County Administrators office who can support other Administrative efforts and projects while performing a majority of the HR duties with the guidance and direction of the Consultant, could be a viable approach; however, while consultant involvement might be reduced to

providing expert level support for compliance and advice on complex matters, in our view, a high functional level of expertise is essential to maintaining an effective HR operation.

6) Knox Regional Communications Center Organizational Study:

(A four (4) page **Draft** report completed by Municipal Resources, INC (MRI)).

Items that were discussed:

- i. One major issue is there is a lot of turnover in KRCC. During the interview/survey investigated possible reasons for this. From 2012 through the first several months of 2019 thirty-four (34) Dispatchers have left their job. Hiring and retaining Public Safety Dispatchers is a large problem on a State and Federal level. MRI queried five (5) other Maine Communication Centers, Cumberland County, Bangor, Augusta, Kittery and Scarborough to assess their turnover rates in the past five years. All but Kittery had turnover, Knox County had the highest turnover rate.
 - ii. Another question being asked, is there a need for a Director and Deputy Director? Those points are being set out to be addressed.
 - iii. MRI interviewed KRCC Employees, Executive Board Members, and Elected Officials to indicate the extent of their interviews. All interviews/surveys that were taken were kept anonymous. A lot of pertinent information was gained through the completed surveys and interviews. Some of the comments were highly charged and personalized, but most of the interviews and surveys consistently focused on the same topics and brought forth similar and overarching issues.
 - iv. For the most part, the key issue identified was the organizational culture and internal workings of the Communication Center as related to the interactions and relationships among those who serve in the Center. It is important to note that throughout the assignment there was not one single individual who expressed concern about the competence, capabilities or manner in which the Dispatchers provided communication services to the First Responders that they serve.
 - v. MRI came away with a real sense that the KRCC Dispatchers are doing outstanding work on behalf of Knox County citizens and First Responders. MRI stated that during the interviews, all of the KRCC Dispatchers showed a sense of pride in their work and an appreciation of its value in the public safety delivery system.
 - vi. Communications Director Lothrop will be retiring in October 2019. Director Lothrop has been the only Director ever at KRCC. Over time various aspects about Dispatch have changed including technology. As Director Lothrop moves toward retirement in October, he can take pride in the organization that he has helped shape and grow from when he started in December of 1999. MRI recommends the County defer decision making for replacement of the Director's position at this time and enlist the assistance of the Users Group Executive Committee.
 - vii. In the State of Maine the matter is further complicated by the role that the State of Maine plays in the overseeing and controlling of the 9-1-1 component. It is understood that the State is currently negotiating with its support service provider, which makes determining if and how "in-house technology" knowledge and expertise fits into the long term requirements for staffing the Communications Center.
- Discuss and Vote on Recommendation of 2020 Maine County Commissioners Association (MCCA) Proposed Membership Dues.
 - i. Lauren Haven emailed a link to the MCCA Long Term Finance Committee report that was presented at the Board of Directors' meeting on July 10, 2019. On this link there is an abundance of information provided to explain the need for a plan, the Committee's process, research and options for the future.
 - ii. Especially refer to pages 8, 9, and 10 of the report as it describes in detail the Committee's recommendations and three year plan. This recommendation of formula #8 is the proposed membership dues formula which will be voted on at the August 14th Board Meeting.

- iii. Members of the Committee have offered to assist in explaining and/or answering Commissioners questions.
 - iv. Commissioner Pohlman attended the last MCCA meeting in Augusta.
 - v. MCCA Long Term Finance Committee Report available upon request.
- Commissioner Meriwether asked if the Charter can be placed on an Agenda sometime later this year. Administrator Hart stated yes, that will be put on an Agenda at a later date.
 - *A motion was made by Commissioner Meriwether to Accept the Recommendation of Maine County Commissioners Association (MCCA) Proposed Increase of Membership Dues for 2020. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

III. Adjourn:

- *A motion was made by Commissioner Pohlman to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Meriwether. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

The meeting adjourned at 3:12 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Galvin
Administrative Assistant

**The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting
held on August 13, 2019.**